THE

NATURE AND BENEFITS

OF

HOLY BAPTISM.

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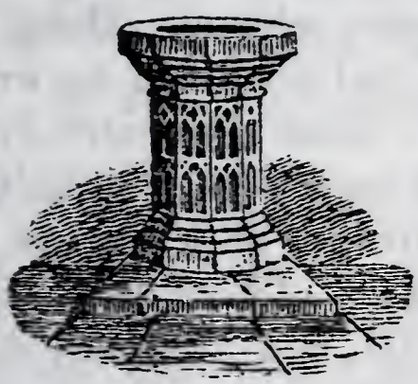

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Holy Baptism.

PART I.

THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

...earliest ages. Beyond all reasonable doubt, it is the doctrine of our own branch of it—a consideration which must have very serious weight with us, her members.

I do not now wish so much to argue in favor of baptismal regeneration, as to show what it is, and what are its place and proportion in the Christian scheme. Many excellent persons are likely to be convinced, not so much by argument, as by apprehending the true view. Once they catch even a glimpse of that, they are led to see how scriptural, how holy, how humbling, yet elevating, it is. Its harmony with the rest of the faith begins to be felt. Next the quantity of Scripture which asserts or implies it begins to rise into sight, and gradually do the difficulties and objections they once thought so forcible, drop away and disappear But to effect this result it will be needful that we go into one or two points that may not seem at first very much connected with the subject. In the case supposed, it is more than likely, that some other parts of the objectors' theology are at fault, and that therein lies the mischief. So vitally connected are the several parts of the Christian scheme, that a man's view of one is nearly sure to affect his view of all the rest. Therefore, it has struck

me as a deficiency in controversialists on this subject,—that, in treating of it, they have, for the most part, treated of it exclusively. This may have, perhaps, been justifiable in disputations scientifically theological. In me, who aim at giving a practical view, it would not be so; and I therefore propose tracing the scriptural doctrine of regeneration to what I conceive to be its root—the human nature of our Lord and Saviour. The general position I take, is this,—that, in that human nature, mankind is generically new-born. When this great principle is fairly apprehended, I feel sure that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration will be seen in its true light, and the general proportion of faith will rise into view.

I.—OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THE NEW ADAM, AND HUMAN NATURE GENERICALLY NEW BORN IN HIM.

One great misconception on the subject of regeneration has been the supposing it a grace known to the sons of men before the gospel dispensation. Hence those who deny that baptism is the ordained channel for its conveyance, appeal not only to cases in the history of the New Testament, where they conceive that the second birth took place before baptism, but, to the saints of the elder covenant, in whom, if it took place at all, it must have taken place altogether without baptism. In other words, they identify any gracious influence of the Holy Spirit producing holiness with regeneration.

But this, though a common, is, I feel persuaded, an altogether modern, view of the subject; and on such a question, I need scarcely say, that, to be altogether modern, must be to be wrong. Truly catholic Christians have, in all ages, felt that the *Christian* Church enjoys a gift of the Spirit that was unknown to the ages and generations before—and the first entrance on this gift they have ever identified with the regeneration on which our Lord insists. And no wonder they have felt thus, seeing that such is the uniform teaching of holy Scripture; for the prophets pointed to a new and abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit, as the great characteristic of those gospel ages which they foretold. An indwelling of the Spirit, never enjoyed before, is surely pointed out by Je-

remiah (xxxi. 33,) as the very badge of each person taken into the new covenant of the latter days. Joel speaks in similar language; while the Baptist distinguishes Messiah from all other teachers sent from God, as the one that "shall baptize with the Holy Ghost."* Nay, further, the New Testament very clearly indicates, not only that none living before, but that none living on earth along with our Lord, partook as yet of the regeneration. His own words were, "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit,—words which have been thus explained by a very profound writer: †—"As long as the fulness of the Divine nature was hidden under the guise of an earthly and human existence, this Divine efficacy of the Messiah did not reveal itself, the Divine life was then His own exclusive possession among men. As He Himself declared, the seed must first fall into the earth and die, in order to bring forth more fruit. It was only after He should have ascended into heaven, that the glorified Son of Man would be able to bestow that baptism of the Spirit in its Divine and invisible efficacy." Elsewhere, we read of the Spirit not being yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified, and His own words, in His great paschal discourse, are as follows:—"I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter cannot come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." In the same discourse the Spirit's dwelling *with* the disciples during our Lord's

* Compare Acts i. 5.

† Neander, Eccl. Hist. Vol i p. 357, Rose's translation. I cite Neander on the present occasion, not merely as being what I have styled him in the text, "a very profound writer,"—and so far, a powerful witness in favor of the view I am just now trying to exhibit; but also because no man will say that he has a bias in favor of high Church or Sacramental theology. The known laxity of his principles on these subjects, excusable from what we cannot but deem his unsatisfactory position in the Christian world, makes his testimony all the stronger in favor of any scriptural principle on which part of that scheme is based In the present instance, it has been given him to see a principle lying close to the roots of baptismal regeneration—viz., that regeneration itself is a benefit so peculiar to the Christian covenant, as not to have been enjoyed even by the apostles during their Lord's sojourn upon earth

earthly sojourn is distinguished from His being *in* them after the day of Pentecost. And indeed, throughout it, the promised gift of the Spirit is distinguished *in kind* from any thing that had been ever enjoyed before, and also announced as one for all ages, so that it can have been no mere miraculous one. Throughout the Epistles the spiritual condition of Christians is in the same way distinguished in kind from that of the ages and generations who lived before them, as may be seen in the following instances. St. Paul uses this language about the privileges *peculiar* to the Gospel. "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.—Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal. iv. 1—7.) And again, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church." (Eph. i. 18—22.) In this latter place, the working of God's power in believers is declared to be according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places; *i. e.* it seems to be an offshoot, so to speak, of the Resurrection and Ascension. But this whole Epistle ought to be carefully considered, in reference to the truth, that regeneration is peculiar to the Gospel.

Once more, we are taught of Old Testament worthies, that "these all, having obtained a good report through faith, *received not the promise:* God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect," (Heb. xi. 39, 40:) while of him than whom there had not arisen a greater among them that are born of woman, we are told, that "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

From all this we cannot but gather, that, since the day of Pentecost, there has been a dispensation, the subjects of which are in a condition above and beyond what had ever been experienced on earth before; and that this difference has consisted in their possession of the Holy Spirit, who had indeed previously operated on men's hearts, but had never been *given* to them. There had never been *a birth* of the Spirit. Let it be observed, that I am not seeking to place prophets and patriarchs, and righteous men of old, on a lower level than is ordinarily done; but I wish to set Christians on a higher. I believe that the former were, indeed, renewed unto holiness; and renewed, as alone they could be, by the Spirit of holiness; but as I have already said, that Spirit, though operating upon them, had never been given to them. They had Him not in His fulness. He moved, as it were, among men, but had not yet come down to dwell with and in them. His workings, as far as they could calculate, were but stray visitations; not an abiding presence, a continued inhabitation. The effects of the fall had not yet been recovered—man, even when in some measure accepted by his Maker, was still an outcast from Eden, still exiled from the eternal home and family of the blessed. The fallen root was not yet taken away,—the spiritual Man not yet revealed—the spiritual constitution not yet provided. I do not deny that, in the other world, saints of the older covenant are, in some way unknown to us, engrafted on the fulness of Christ's body, and made partakers of all those privileges which He died to purchase. I do not deny this, for our hope is to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. But most assuredly, *while on earth* they "received not the promise"—while on earth they had not "come unto Mount Sion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and all that bright and blissful fellowship on which

we enter there. This could not be till the day of Christ Jesus, the new Spiritual Man.

Regeneration, then, was delayed till the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. The man Christ Jesus is Himself the regeneration of the human race. In His human nature mankind was generically new born. He came in our nature for this very purpose, that He might sanctify it, make it acceptable and spiritual. He

Adam—a new type or exemplar of man—a

heavenly

the old defiled and carnal one. He is the true Man, in whom the eterual Mind sees His great idea of humanity brought entirely out; and those who, being engrafted upon Him, continue in union with Him, and grow out of Him, attain in their measure and degree, this true manhood. What He is, they to some extent become. They are predestinated to be conformed to His image, "that he might be the first-born among many brethren."

II—BAPTISM CONSIDERED AS THE SIGN OF REDEEMED HUMANITY, AND THE MEANS OF BEING ENGRAFTED UPON CHRIST.

Now, observe the Son of God, thus coming into human nature, as a new and sanctifying root and representative of it, has sanctified it altogether. He has conferred an universal benefit on it. What He took was not the nature of this or that man, or class of men, but human nature generally—the nature of which every man is a sharer. He thus manifested Himself as an universal Deliverer, as one who came to reconcile the whole world to God, as the Saviour, not of some men, but of *men*. We must run counter to the whole New Testament, if we make Him other than an universal Redeemer; and therefore no man need for a moment doubt, that he is himself comprised in the scheme of salvation. He needs no other warrant for claiming all Christian privileges than his human nature—since human nature is that which Christ

has redeemed and hallowed.* Therefore, simply as a sharer in human nature, may he, believing in Christ, offer himself for baptism—the apostolical commission being, not to go to some favored nation or class, but to "go make disciples of *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Baptism is thus the great sign of redeemed humanity. It takes man simply as man, as a sharer in that nature which

ever does not turn away from Christ and His grace—is regenerated thereby. In the man Christ Jesus, the human nature he bears was generically new-born, and he himself has become engrafted on Him, by the right of His own appointment, and therefore has entered on a second birth, become a follower of Christ in the regeneration. The very first specified benefit of baptism is, that we thereby are "made members of Christ." We are engrafted on Him, the true Vine, and if we but abide in Him, we shall bear fruit through Him. The living sap will reach to the very smallest branch that remains unsevered, either by outward abscission, or inward obstruction, from the stem or the root. If, therefore, no man fail of the grace of the new covenant, from original defect, so to speak—*i. e.* from not being one of those for whom it was designed,—or from want of will in Christ that he should receive it,—if nothing but his own perversity can hinder the effect of baptism,—it is obvious that all infants must be considered regenerate in that sacrament. They cannot hinder its due effect—

* This does not involve a denial of much peculiar preparation being necessary on the part of adults before they can be admitted to baptism. It merely asserts what is their *essential* claim to such admission. As *men*, as *human beings*, they become candidates,—by a tried, penitent, and believing temper, *they* prove that they themselves enter into this—that they see how manhood has been redeemed and made holy, and that they themselves wish for this true manhood—that they will cleave to it and cherish it, if we admit them to the appointed initiation—*the birth* into it; and, therefore, after such trial, we do admit them

they cannot refuse Christ or His grace. The only cause, therefore, that can render it inoperative on an adult has no place in them. So that if we are to deny their regeneration in baptism, it must be for a totally different reason—it must be because we consider them without the scope of the sacrament, and incapable of its grace.

III—INFANT BAPTISM

I do not now mean to enter on all the arguments that may be advanced for infant baptism. Undoubtedly there are strong *indications* in Scripture favorable to the practice. It comes to us also armed with Church authority from the very first days of the gospel dispensation—a sanction which no judicious Christian will treat lightly, and to which our own Church attaches weight generally, and peculiarly in the present case. By these and by other considerations, her members may well satisfy themselves of the propriety of the practice. At present, I mean to justify it, by following out the course of thought in which we have now been engaged, by showing how it is involved in the very idea of baptism as the sign of redeemed humanity, and in that very idea of redeemed humanity whereof baptism is the sign. For, did not Christ redeem human nature altogether? And if so, must He not have redeemed it from its very roots and beginnings? Can we fix a time, subsequent to his birth, in a man's mortal career, at which his human nature commenced? If we cannot, then no more can we fix a time in which there may not be claimed for him the redemption of that nature which is in Christ, whereof baptism is at once the sign and the seal. Did not the Son of God as He became a man, begin even as others, by being a little infant; and if His manhood has consecrated the manhood of His brethren, why should we doubt that His childhood too has consecrated their childhood, His infancy, their infancy? St. Irenæus thus descants on our redemption through the human nature of our Lord. "He came to save all through Himself; all, I say, who through Him are born anew unto God, infants and young children, and boys and youths, and elders. Therefore, He passed

through every age, and was made an infant for infants, sanctifying infants,a little child for children, sanctifying their age, and, at the same time, being made an example to them of piety, righteousness and subjection,—a youth for youths, being made an example to such, and sanctifying them to the Lord." In treating which passage, Neander comes to the very principle before us, which I maintain to be the sufficient basis of infant bap, tism. "We find the essentially Christian notion, from which infant baptism would derive itself spontaneonsly, the more Christianity penetrated into domestic life, viz., that Christ, by means of that Divine life which He communicated to human nature, and revealed in it, has sanctified that nature from the very first seed of its developement."

And this principle is in strict analogy with our mode of viewing infants in other relations. A child is born into his earthly family, and considered a member of that, though all-unconscious of the fact himself; and the peculiar family life on which he thus enters, with its distinguishing character, whatever that may be, is gradually developed in him, dawning with the first dawn of his consciousness, "growing with his growth, and strengthening with his strength." So of his national life, with all its peculiarity.—He does not enter on that at some marked critical period of his after course, but he is born into it from the very first, and silently and unceasingly does he grow up an Englishman, a Frenchman, or a German, as the case may be. Nay more, he is, as we all admit, a human being from the first,—the germ of the full-grown man; and all orthordox Christians believe, born by nature to the sin and woe of humankind, though he has committed no acts of sin himself. Now, if that unconscious age do not preclude original sin in a first birth, why should it be held to preclude grace and righteousness in a second? To this we think must the decriers of infant baptism be brought. They must either deny original sin,—deny that infants need Christ or the grace of his gospel, or else they must hold that there is a stage of human nature to which His redemption has not extended. If unconsciousness preclude the operation of grace in any sense whatever, it must equally preclude the operation of sin in any sense whatever.

Therefore, I say, that in asserting the regeneration of infants in

fact connected with their soci[illegible]
that from their first birth they belong to the families in which they are severally born, and are ordinarily destined to grow up with the peculiar constitutions, characters and tendencies of those families,—as we believe that, from their first birth, they belong to their respective nations, and are destined gradually, with their increasing age, to exhibit the peculiar stamps of those nations upon them,—as finally, we believe that, from their first birth, they belong to humankind, contain in themselves the germs of its distinctive character, and share mysteriously in its sin and woe, so [illegible] can make them

We have hitherto been [illegible]
our human nature on that of our Lord, in whom that nature has been generically born anew. We have now to view it as an admission into the Church. This, at first sight, is a different aspect of the rite, though in reality, as we shall soon see, it is but a feature of the other. Meanwhile, let us proceed to its consideration.

...ner than the ... and the gate of heaven." It is the ark of the everlasting covenant, the shrine of the Eternal Spirit, the region of promise and blessing, the new and better Eden, the kingdom of heaven upon earth. There is no distinction between the visible Church and the invisible, further than what consists in the presence of frailty and sin, even in the best members of the former, and the fact that many, not outwardly severed from her pale, may even now be so inwardly. The invisible Church is hut ...

... by our opponents, ... Baptism is an admission into the visible Church, I go on to say that, as such, it is, as we have already viewed it, an engrafting of our human nature on the human nature of our Lord. For the Church is His mystical body. By her He is still,

class—looking in each person simply at that human nature which the Son of God has arrested and made His own, and by doing so, has redeemed and regenerated, and dealing with each person accordingly. The Church is the great and the only society that looks simply at Humanity, and its relations the only ones we contract with each other simply as men.

Further, as the Church is in covenant with God, so does each member she receives become individually in covenant with Him also. Therefore baptism, duly received, conveys regeneration, inasmuch as the recipient is thereby taken into covenant with God and in[illegible]

But this great benefit of the second birth, the conferring on men a spiritual constitution, with spiritual powers, is of no more avail to the recipient, unless he choose to exercise that constitution, and put forth those powers, than would be the natural constitution and powers he receives from his first birth, unless they were similarly exercised and put forth. The difference between the two cases, is, that the latter is to agre at extent hypothetical; the former, alas, is actual and frequent. No man born into this breathing world ever failed to put forth some of the powers that he has in relation to that world. Born to the light and the air, he has no inducement not to open his eyes to the one, and to

inhale the other. But the case can be supposed of his refusing to do either of these things; and though he would thereby forego the benefits of his natural birth, the birth itself would still have taken place. And this, which is little more than a hypothetical case as regards our natural birth, is actually the case with numbers of us as regards our spiritual. Born into a spiritual world, with spiritual sunshine, and a spiritual atmosphere all around, we yet madly shut our eyes to the one, and refuse to breathe the other. But, in this case, as in the other, the fact of birth remains unaf-

a common portion of holiness and blessedness, to which he continually cleaves, and from which he derives daily life and strength. There is nothing that I know of to warrant the image under which regeneration is apt to present itself—that of a man changed, if I may be allowed the expression, in the eye of a naturalist; no longer the same human being with his fellows, but endowed with a permanent gift which they have not. I do not believe that the greatest saint has the Holy Spirit otherwise than as a continually illapsing gift, in virtue of his continual cleaving to Christ. He can no more live on the strength of yesterday, than

he can live on the meal of yesterday. He can no more live on any thing in himself spiritually, than he can live on any thing in himself naturally. He cannot keep up his bodily life without again and again deriving nourishment from the external world; no more can he keep up his spiritual, without again and again deriving nourishment from the Church, which is the external world of his soul, and by means of continued fellowship with which he continually receives the Holy Spirit. The ripened saint differs indeed from the newly born in growth, strength, acquirement of graces, and other blessed results of a long presence of that Spirit; but he in no way differs from him as to the mode in, or the terms on, which he enjoys that presence; each has in it virtue of the same covenant of baptism, each has it as a gift not made once for all, but received daily in answer to daily prayer,—each has it not as an individual, but as a member of Christ's Church; each has it not for himself, but as being willing to be one among many brethren, and because the Holy Spirit is, through the grace of the gospel, a common portion to himself and those brethren.

VI.—BAPTISM CONSIDERED AS CONVEYING ADOPTION.

There remains yet another view before we complete this branch of the subject. By christian baptism we become children of God. This is one of the views which, although here reserved to the last, is put prominently forward by our Church. By nature we are children of wrath, by grace we become children of God. This, of course, follows from all that has been said, more especially from what has been urged respecting our brotherhood to Christ. If He be our Brother, then must God be our Father.

And the same thing follows from viewing baptism as an incorporation into the Church. The Church is "the household of God;" and they who, by nature, were "strangers and foreigners," are by baptism brought into that blessed household, adopted into the great rejoicing family that has Christ for the first-born, and God as its Father. I will not enlarge more upon this point at

present, partly because it is obvious; partly because I shall have occasion to return to it in the course of the practical recapitulation which will form the second part of this treatise. Meanwhile, I may observe, that, so impressed was the early Church with this truth, that the knowledge of the Lord's Prayer was only imparted to converts when they were ripe for baptism. It was called *the prayer of the regenerate*, because none other could say, *Our Father, which art in heaven*, with full meaning to the words.

PART II.

PRACTICAL RESULTS OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

We have now seen how fitly the day of a man's baptism may be styled the day of his new and better birth. He rises from the heavenly washing with new relations, new prospects, new powers. He is engrafted on the human nature of Him in whom human nature is generically born anew. He has received the great appointed sign and seal of redeemed manhood—he is incorporated into the Church, the holy and heavenly kingdom, in which are all spiritual blessings—he is thereby taken into a covenant of spirituality and grace, and so has had such a donation of the Spirit made over to him as entitles him to count on the Spirit's aid whenever he really wishes to do those good things which he cannot in his own strength. We have seen, too, that such a presence of the Spirit is the only one that any Christian enjoys,—a presence pledged by covenant, from which sin must separate—to which true repentance can restore him—not an abiding peculiarity of any man, distinguishing him from his fellows. We have further seen, that one most gracious and comforting feature of regeneration in baptism is our adoption into God's family—our right to call God our Father. Let us now consider the practical results that follow from this.

I.—ASSURANCE.

I consider the first of these results to be, that each baptized man ought to feel assured of being in God's grace and favor. This, my first head, will be found really to comprehend the remaining ones, but for many reasons it requires separate consideration.

I think nothing is more observable than the way in which the true notion of the Church and the Sacraments meets all the spiritual cravings of man, and how, in consequence, it will be found to present us with the truth, of which many of our favorite notions of the enthusiast are but distorted phantoms. And this, I think, both the charitable and the profitable way of looking at the several forms of fanaticism around us. To regard them with nothing but contempt is unworthy of a Christian—to suppose that they present us with unmixed error, is unlike a wise man. However unfonnded, and however mischievous we may justly deem them, yet, if they be taking a firm hold of earnest minds, it is scarcely possible but that they are distortions of some truths, of which we shall find the proper places and proportions in the orthodox doctrine and scheme of the Church. Thus, when we see any particular form of enthusiastic error, may we not only be the better qualified for rescuing its victims, inasmuch as we show that we can sympathize with them, and that we hold the truth whereof the partial presence in it is making their error dear to their hearts, in a better and purer way than they do; but we can benefit ourselves: a fanatical delusion may be made the means to us of illustrating scriptural truth, because when we see it, we shall be led to look in the orthodox system for the substance of which it is the distorted reflection.

Now, this is very much the case with what is commonly meant by the doctrine of assurance. Many, as is notorious, hold that each believer ought to be certain of his own salvation. There is a large sect which makes this doctrine one of its distinctive badges ;* while many belonging to other persuasions, and some in the

*I mean the Wesleyans. At the same time it must be observed, that, as they do not hold the doctrine, of final perserverance, their doctrine of assurance is

Church, but of a sectarian turn of mind, embrace and proclaim it. I imagine, however, that most of my readers will agree with me in rejecting it, *as thus held*, on grounds both of Scripture and prudence; they will say with me, that it is both false and dangerous. No sober Christian will fail to observe, that the New Testament not only permits, but prescribes, doubts as to our spiritual condition,—doubts which even those who have advanced furthest in the Divine life will sometimes rationally feel. Besides, the New Testament knows nothing, beyond the Christian's answer of a good conscience towards God, of peculiar reasons for confidence, peculiar privileges, or peculiar experiences; and, unless there be some general ground on which others may rest this assurance, equally with the flighty Christian who proclaims his own possession of it, it must be vain and illusory, must create its own grounds, must be itself its own foundation.*

By giving such replies as these, we do, indeed, refute the sectarian doctrine of assurance; but nevertheless I think we miss the mark. Our brother has in him the dawning of a truth on this subject, and he feels that, unless rude violence is to be done to the language of the New Testament, there is something revealed in it which the sinner is not merely to hope for, but to appropriate;—that the high privileges it proclaims are spoken of as the *known* possession of some among the sons of men—that the spirit of adoption which it demands, implies, and is identical with, the assurance for which he contends. I believe that there is no effectual way of answering him, except by preaching to him

both less mischievous, and nearer the truth in the case of those who accompany the one tenet with the other. The Wesleyans err in grounding their assurance on inward frames and feelings, instead of on the outward, definite, undeluding, pledges of God's grace.

* This is very plain when assurance is declared to be of the essence of faith. Till he possesses faith, a man is held to be without the pale of God's favor; but to real faith, an assurance that he is in that favor, is said to be necessary. He is, therefore, to believe that which is a lie of himself, up to the moment of his believing it! Surely an absurdity like this carries with it its own refutation.

the orthodox and catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration. By the Church's jealousy over that doctrine, and the loud clear voice in which she proclaims it, he may be made to perceive that she recognises the whole of his truth, clearing it of the accompanying error—that she both keeps it purer and develops it better than he does himself.

What, then, is this truth felt after by the enthusiast, and fully brought out in the doctrine of baptismal regeneration?

It cannot be a truth having direct reference to the question of any man's final salvation, for that the Church holds to be in each case contingent and uncertain. Scripture has revealed of none of us, that in the great day he is certainly to be placed at the Judge's right hand, and where Scripture is silent we must be silent too, and "judge nothing before the time." Yet there is something gracious and gladdening of which we are to be assured. We are to be assured of our being in God's present grace and favour, however it is to be with us at the last. We are to "know and believe in the love that God hath to us." We are by no means to doubt our having been made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." And therefore is each one of us to say "Our Father" in the spirit of a son; he is to serve God "in holiness, *without fear*;" he is to rejoice in the cetainty of his redemption and regeneration; he is to feel assured that in him the old lineage from Adam is cut off,

doctrine of baptismal regeneration, scripturally understood and practically enforced, we answer the legitimate cravings of the enthusiast—we give him all the assurance he has a right to ask, or really needs, for the enlargement of his heart; not the assurance of his own final salvation, for that we cannot give him, but the assurance of a present true grace of God, in which he may stand—of an ascertained regeneration, and an ascertained adoption by a loving Father who is in heaven.

I do not mean to say that the Christian is not to look forward to final acceptance with joyful hope. And obviously the farther he advances in the Divine life, the more must the grounds of such hope be multiplied, and the more confidently may he look forward to death as for him but a falling asleep in the Lord, and the resurrection as the day that is to bring to him his crown and his glory. But what I contend for is, that, even in the beginning of his course, when there can hardly be so confident an expectation, the Christian is nevertheless, in virtue of his baptism, to pray and act in the spirit of adoption,—to begin running in the path of God's commandments with his heart set at liberty—to feel assured that he has nothing to wait for, but may move at once in the direction of good, with strength ever present to sustain him,—that he has spiritual powers at command just as he has physical, and that, in both cases alike, he can ascertain his [illegible] by exercising them

II.—SPIRITUALITY OF LIFE AND CONDUCT.

A second great duty resulting from baptismal regeneration is that of living spiritually. We are to believe that we are spiritual beings, with spiriritual relations, and spiritual powers. And we are to believe and act on this, in spite of the presence and the power of a sensual nature, which is continually telling us the very contrary. The world and the flesh are continually saying that the attempt to live above them is a vain one—that they are and must be paramount so long as we are connected with them —that a spiritual life is impossible for us. We must meet such tyranny by calling our baptism to mind: we must remember that in baptism we died and were buried with Christ—that we cast away from us the things of the old man—that we renounced the former law of our being—that we rose from the baptismal laver to a life new, heavenly, and divine.—a life not of the flesh but of the Spirit,—a life of which the springs are not in this world but the other—a life "hid with Christ in God." We have bade adieu to the flesh,—henceforth, with the Apostle, we are to "know no man after the flesh," but to view ourselves and all around us in spiritual relations, and to cultivate union with our brethren by spiritual ties. Our citizenship is to be in heaven; to us all things have been made new, and all things of God, who hath reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ.

III.—GREAT WATCHFULNESS OVER OURSELVES, AND DREAD OF FALLING INTO SIN.

A third very solemn duty is involved in the consciousness of

* The ... of such is considered by St. Augustine, in his treatise, "De

way misusing them. We are entrusted [illegible] the pearl of great price, and woe to us if we part with it again. We are placed on the very pinnacle of spiritual exaltation; and if we fall from it, how great, how ruinous, how utterly crushing that fall will be! In proportion to the greatness of baptismal benefit, is the malignity and danger of sin wilfully persisted in after baptism. It is sinning against grace, and unless cured by a timely repentance, must therefore incur the "many stripes," the "greater damnation."

This is a view of Christian privileges which is continually presented to us in the New Testament. It will be found broadly and clearly exhibited in the opening verses of 1 Cor. x. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews throughout, a portion of Scripture which should be read with trembling, by every baptized man who is conscious that he is living in the service of self and of sin.

It may be said, (and with truth,) that in the Epistle in question a particular form of sin, apostacy, is aimed at, which cannot easily be committed now. To which I reply, that it cannot easily be committed now as it was then, by a single definite act; but that, according to the principles of the New Testament, a long course of unrepented sin after baptism, amounts to apostacy, and will be treated as such. Of course we cannot judge when it amounts to this, even in ourselves; and accordingly, with great propriety, we are prohibited by our Church from denying the grant of repentance to any who sin after baptism. Their seeking restoration is a pledge, as regards them, that the fearful result has not yet taken place; while God's still extending to them the tokens of His mercy, is a pledge, as regards Him, that He is still willing to be gracious. Bless-

never been within the fold. Such doctrine, as that the mass of those around have still to wait for their calling to gospel privileges, and their new birth in Christ, is indeed sure to meet with a favorable reception, if for no other reason, yet for this, that it gives them an excuse for continuing meanwhile in their sins. But Scripture speaks to us in other and much more awful language. It tells us that God's "Divine power hath given unto us *all* things that pertain unto life and godliness; and it warns us, that, if we perish at last, it will not be as those who were always outcasts, but as those who have thrown good things away that had been conferred—not as heathens, but as apostates. In short, our final ruin will be like our first—a fall—an exile from a happy home in which we were placed—a loss of that Divine favour which we did once enjoy. In *these* respects the second sentence of death will correspond to the first, but in *this* it will differ—it will be final, admitting of neither reverse nor mitigation! Warily, therefore, must the baptized man walk through this world of danger; most careful must he be of the jewel committed to his keeping; most sedulous, lest the salt lose its savour, for if it do, wherewith shall *it* be salted? The unclean spirit has gone out of him;—let him see to it that he return not again with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and so the last end of that man be worse than the first.

V.—EDUCATION OUGHT TO BE CONDUCTED WITH REFERENCE TO BAPTISM.

HITHERTO we have been viewing the practical duties resulting from baptism, by whomsoever received, by an adult in full knowledge of what he is doing, as well as by an unconscious infant. But now we must turn to thoughts connected with the latter, which are practical ones for so many of the members of our Church.

What comfort then,—what gladness of heart—what boldness of purpose ought the thought of baptismal regeneration to give to parents, to sponsors, to all who are entrusted with the Christian young! Parents bring helpless infants into this world of mortality—they communicate to them their own heritage of sin and woe,—they impart to them a nativity from the first Adam, a nativity of the earth, earthy, burdened with guilt and death. But scarcely have they done this, before Divine mercy puts it into

their power to counteract all its evils. Through them their helpless infant is born into a world of mortality; but by bringing him to Christ, he is straightway born again into an immortal life and a heavenly inheritance; for the nativity from the first Adam, which is all that parents can impart, there is now a nativity from the second, even the new Adam of Life and Righteousness. And these things being so, with what thoughts ought we not to regard a baptized infant! The sight of a baby, in helplessness and mystery, fills even the natural man with yearnings of tenderness, mingled with awe,—with a reverence in which even the brute creation is made somewhat to sympathize. But oh! how enhanced is all this by the considerations on which we have been dwelling! That helpless infant is now indeed an object of reverence, for he is unutterably consecrated—he has become a member of Him, who, as he once contracted His own immensity into the same narrow limits of human infancy, can well make another infant one of His brethren; and impart to him the germ of His likeness and His glory.

And warranted as we are in thoughts like these, how carefully should we pursue the work of education in the light of them! With what religious oversight ought we not to watch over the first dawnings of reason, affection, and will! What a sanctity may we not impart even to those first trainings, by which, in the absence of all other, we seek to surround and so imbue our charge with gentleness, refinement, delicacy, courtesy, and love! How sedulously should we cultivate the growing sense of those relationships to ourselves which we shall so soon be called to use as types of His very highest and holiest ones!

And when that time arrives, how careful must we be to teach him to say, "Our Father who art in Heaven" with meaning to the words,—to believe that those words do indeed express a mighty reality—a reality as regards him,—to have recourse at all times to his heavenly Father,—to feel assured that he is individually the object of that Father's love, and that, young as his, he is to fill with the free filial instinct of a son! How early shall we not begin to teach him that he is not his own, and to apply to him that consideration for avoiding sin on which an Apostle has laid such stress, the calling his baptism to mind!

The place to which I refer is 2 Peter i. 9, where the Apostle traces the want of Christian graces in any member of the Church to a forgetfulness of his baptismal regeneration. He says, "he that lacketh these things" (the graces St. Peter had just been enforcing) "is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that *he was purged from his old sins.*" And if this rule of recollecting the purification of baptism be thus effectual as a safeguard to adults, how successful may we not hope to find it in children, who, with whatever tendencies to, have not any confirmed habit of, sinning; whose minds are so flexible and so open to impressions, and who cannot yet have hardened their hearts!

Therefore, let parents, sponsors, guardians, teachers, and pastors, see that they educate from, and with constant recurrence to, baptism. I am sure that religious education, if duly accompanied with prayer to God, will be found far more effectual on this principle, than it has ever been on any other. The children of religious parents will, for the most part, cease to present us with the painful spectacle so general now—that of diversity from their parents, constraint in their presence, unreality, and a faint barrier of early prejudice yielding no resistance so soon as the enemy comes in like a flood.

Beautiful indeed and joyful may a christian education become, when baptismal benefit is freely appealed to and employed. We shall then find that we have powers on our side greater than can be brought against us. We may then count on willing learners. Religion will cease to seem the strange and alien thing to children that it too often does at present. They will no longer look on it as an unknown process to which the hearts of a few grown-up people around them have been subjected, and one or two rare children of their own age, of whom they read in memoirs, only to feel how utterly unlike it all is to any thing in themselves. They will join prayer, in the services of the Church, in listening to religious truth in the spirit prescribed by the beginning of their Catechisms, *i. e.* they will do so as approaching something which nearly concerns themselves, in which they themselves have a portion and a birthright. They will listen as learning the truth about themselves—learning who they are and Whose they are—what

has been, and what, if they ask it, will be, done for them—what they have been made, and what it is in their power to become—what they possess now, and what they may hope to enjoy hereafter; to Whom they have been united in the meantime, and what will be the glorious issue of that union, if they seek and employ the grace which will keep it undissolved.

The following beautiful poems, by living authors, may help both to illustrate and recommend the views I have been trying to exhibit:—

TO ——,

ON THE MORNING OF HER BAPTISM.

This will we name thy better birth-day, child,
O born already to a sin-worn world,
But now unto a kingdom undefiled,
Where over thee love's banner is unfurled.

Lo! on the morning of this Sabbath day
I lay aside the weight of human fears,
Which I had for thee, and without dismay,
Look through the avenue of coming years.

I see thee passing, without mortal harm,
Through ranks of foes against thy safety met;
I see thee passing—thy defence and charm
The seal of God upon thy forehead set.

From this time forth thou often shalt hear say
Of what immortal City thou wert given
The rights and full immunities to-day,
And of the hope laid up for thee in heaven.

From this time forward thou shalt not believe
That thou art earthly, or that aught of earth,
Or aught that hell can threaten, shall receive
Power on the children of the second birth.

O, risen out of death into the day
Of an immortal life, we bid thee hail,
And will not kiss the waterdrops away,
The dew that rests upon thy forehead pale.

And if the seed of better life lie long,
As in a wintry hiddenness and death;
Then, calling back this day, we will be strong
To wait in hope for heaven's reviving breath;

To water, if there should be such sad need,
The undiscerned germ with sorrowing tears;
To wait until from that undying seed
Out of the earth a heavenly plant appears;

The growth and produce of a fairer land,
  And thence transplanted to a barren soil,
It needs the tendance of a careful hand,
  Of love, that is not weary with long toil.

And thou, dear child, whose very helplessness
  Is as a bond upon us, and a claim,
Mayest thou have this of us, as we no less
  Have daily from our Father known the same.

R. C. TRENCH.

TO MY GOD-CHILD

ON THE DAY OF IS BAPTISM.

No harsh transitions Nature knows,
  No dreary spaces intervene;
Her work in silence forward goes,
  And rather felt than seen.

For where the watcher, that with eye
  Turned eastward, yet could ever say
When the faint glooming in the sky
  First lightened into day?

Or maiden, by an opening flower
  That many a summer morn has stood,
Could fix upon the very hour
  It ceased to be a bud?

The rainbow colours mix and blend
  Each with the other, until none
Can tell where fainter hues had end,
  And deeper tints begun.

But only doth this much appear—
  That the pale hues are deeper grown;
The day has broken bright and clear;
  The bud is fully blown.

Dear child, and happy shalt thou be,
  If from this hour, with just increase
All good things shall grow up in thee,
  By such unmarked degrees.

If there shall be no dreary space
  Between thy present self and past,
No dreary miserable space
  With spectral shapes aghast;

But the full graces of thy prime
  Shall, in their weak beginnings, be
Lost in an unremembered time
  Of holy infancy.

This blessing is the first and best;
  Yet has not prayer been made in vain
For them, though not so amply blest,
  The lost and found again.

And shouldest thou, alas! forbear
  To choose the better, nobler lot,
Yet may we not esteem our prayer
  Unheard or heeded not;

If after many a wandering,
  And many a devious pathway trod;

If, having known that bitter thing,
To leave the Lord thy God,

It yet shall be, that thou at last,
Although thy noon be lost, return
To bind life's eve in union fast
To this, its blessed morn.

R. C. Trench.

Where is it mothers learn their love?
In every Church a Fountain springs
On which the Eternal Dove
Hovers on softest wings.

What sparkles in that lucid flood
Is water, by gross mortals eyed,
But, seen by Faith, 'tis blood,
Out of a dear Friend's side.

A few calm words of faith and prayer,
A few bright drops of holy dew,
Shall work a wonder there
Earth's charmers never knew.

Oh! happy arms, where cradled lies,
And ready for the Lord's embrace,
That precious sacrifice
The darling of his grace.

Blessed eyes that see the smiling gleam
Upon the slumbering features glow,
When the life-giving stream
Touches the tender brow:

Or, when the Holy Cross is signed,
And the young soldier duly sworn,
With true and fearless mind
To serve the Virgin Born.

But happiest ye, who sealed and blessed,
Back to your arms your treasure take,
With Jesus' mark impressed,
To nurse for Jesus' sake.

To whom, as if in hallowed air,
He knelt before some awful shrine,
His innocent gestures wear
A meaning half divine.

To whom Love's daily touch is seen
In strengthening form and freshening hue,
In the fixed brow serene
The deep yet eager view.

Who taught thy pure and even breath
To come and go with such sweet grace?
Whence thy reposing faith
Though in our frail embrace?

O, tender gem, and full of heaven!
Not in the twilight stars on high,
Not in moist flowers at even,
See we our God so nigh.

Sweet one make haste and know Him too,
Thine own adopting Father love,
That like thine earliest dew
Thy dying sweets may prove.

Christian Year

FINIS